

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 11366 01 OF 02 211741Z

44

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

SAM-01 TRSE-00 EB-07 COME-00 SIL-01 LAB-04 /073 W

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R 211730Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3858

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL BELFAST

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 11366

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, UK

SUBJ: GUILLOTINE ERECTED AND BLADE HONED, HOUSE OF

'L' COMMONS, JULY 20

REF: (A) LONDON 11120; (B) LONDON 11301

1. SUMMARY: IN TEN HOUR-LONG SESSION GOVERNMENT WON VOTES IN THREE FUSED MOTIONS TO INSTITUTE GUILLOTINE ON FIVE SEPARATE BILLS. GOVERNMENT MAJORITY WAS SIX TO 23 VOTES ON MAJOR ISSUES. DEBATE WAS ORATOR'S PARADISE, BUT ISSUE NEVER SERIOUSLY IN DOUBT. END SUMMARY.

2. LEADER OF THE HOUSE, MICHAEL FOOT, INTRODUCED GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSED GUILLOTINE ON FIVE SEPARATE BILLS IN HOUSE OF COMMONS DEBATE JULY 20. THE FIVE SEPARATE BILLS HAD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 LONDON 11366 01 OF 02 211741Z

BEEN GROUPED IN THREE SEPARATE GUILLOTINE MOTIONS (REF A)

WHICH WERE CARRIED BY GOVERNMENT MAJORITY OF SIX IN ONE INSTANCE (NATIONALIZATION), 17 IN ANOTHER (PAY BEDS AND DOCK LABOR), AND 23 IN ANOTHER (TIED COTTAGES AND EDUCATION).

3. DEBATE WAS MARKED BY FLIGHTS OF ORATORICAL FANCY, HIGHLY REPETITIVE OF PREVIOUS DEBATES ON GUILLOTINE MOTIONS. SPEECHES OF FOOT AND CHIEF CONSERVATIVE SPEAKER PEYTON (FOOT'S OPPOSITE NUMBER FOR THE OPPOSITION) WERE ALMOST INTERCHANGEABLE WITH EARLIER SPEECHES ON GUILLOTINES WHEN FOOT WAS IN OPPOSITION AND HIMSELF OBJECTED STRENUOUSLY TO CONSERVATIVES' USE OF GUILLOTINE.

4. ONE CONSERVATIVE MP CHARACTERIZED ATMOSPHERE OF HOUSE AS "SUBDUED CHAOS". ARGUMENT FOCUSED ON NICETIES OF CONSTITUTIONAL LAW AND PRACTICE, INCLUDING SPEAKER'S RULING OF JULY 19 THAT GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS WOULD NOT NEED TO BE SEPARATE FOR EACH BILL ON WHICH GUILLOTINE WAS TO BE EXERCISED.

5. ALTHOUGH CONSERVATIVE BREAK IN PAIRING ARRANGEMENT ANNOUNCED BY CONSERVATIVE LEADER THATCHER (REFTEL A) FORCED GOVERNMENT TO BRING MINISTERS HOME FROM BRUSSELS AND MONTREAL FOR THE VOTE, VOTE ITSELF WAS NOT REALLY IN DOUBT. GOVERNMENT ALSO EXTRACTED FROM HOME AND HOSPITAL SEVERAL SEVERELY ILL MPS, WHOSE VOTES COULD BE "NODDED THROUGH". LABOR ALSO BROUGHT FAITHFUL NORTHERN IRELAND SUPPORTER MCGUIRE FROM BELFAST FOR VOTE.

6. FOR THE OPPOSITION, CRITICAL POINT WAS TO KEEP ALL OF OPPOSITION UNITED, BUT THE CONSERVATIVES FAILED TO GET SUPPORT OF WELSH AND SCOT NATIONALISTS, PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF GOVERNMENT'S GUARANTEE OF CONCESSIONS TO WELSH AND SCOT AIRCRAFT AND SHIPBUILDING FIRMS. IN SPITE OF CONSERVATIVE EFFORTS, WHICH INCLUDED BRINGING IN TWO SICK CONSERVATIVE MPS, PROSPECT FOR DEFEATING GOVERNMENT WAS SLIM FROM THE BEGINNING GIVEN LABOR VICTORIES IN BY-ELECTIONS IN ROTHERHAM AND THURROCK.

7. GUILLOTINE, HAVING BEEN REFURBISHED AS A RESULT OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 LONDON 11366 01 OF 02 211741Z

COMMONS DEBATE, NOW GOES INTO OPERATION WITH CONSIDERATION BY COMMONS TODAY, JULY 21, OF EDUCATION BILL. NEXT WILL BE GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION ON TIED COTTAGES JULY 22, DOCK WORK LEGISLATION JULY 26, AND THREE DAYS FOR DEBATE ON NATIONALIZATION OF SHIPBUILDING AND AIRCRAFT INDUSTRIES JULY 27-29. REMAINING GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION ON ELIMINATION OF PAY BEDS IN HOSPITALS HAS NOT YET BEEN SCHEDULED; DEBATE COULD CONCEIVABLY BE HELD EITHER

WEEK BEGINNING AUGUST 2 OR IN HOLD-OVER SESSION OF PARLIAMENT SCHEDULED IN OCTOBER AFTER RECESS. USE OF GUILLOTINE LIMITS TIME FOR DEBATE IN COMMONS TO ONE DAY ON FOUR OF THE FIVE GOVERNMENT BILLS, WITH THREE DAYS ALLOWED NEXT WEEK ON NATIONALIZATION.

8. COMMENT: DEBATE ON USE OF GUILLOTINE WAS ROUTINE (THOUGH PROLONGED) REPETITION OF ARGUMENTS PREVIOUSLY RESORTED TO BY BOTH CONSERVATIVES AND LABOR GOVERNMENTS. WITH GUILLOTINE NOW IN EFFECT ON BILLS, THE GOVERNMENT

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PAGE 01 LONDON 11366 02 OF 02 211743Z

43  
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R 211730Z JUL 76  
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3859  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS  
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN  
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AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE  
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 11366

WILL LIKELY EXPERIENCE NO GREAT DIFFICULTY IN CARRYING

ITS LEGISLATION THROUGH. VOTING PATTERNS WHICH WERE SET IN DEBATING THE USE OF THE GUILLOTINE WILL, IN ALL PROBABILITY, DETERMINE PARLIAMENTARY VOTES ON THE FIVE BILLS. BOTH LABOR AND CONSERVATIVES ARE UNDER THREE-LINE WHIPS FOR VOTES AND, THOUGH LATE NIGHT VOTES ARE EXPECTED ON ALL FIVE BILLS, THERE IS SOME RELIEF ON BOTH SIDES OF THE HOUSE ABOUT FINISHING UP LEGISLATION BEFORE THE RECESS.

9. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER GUILLOTINE WILL BECOME A CONSTANT FEATURE IN BRITISH PARLIAMENTARY PRACTICES. IT HAS BEEN RESORTED TO, AS FOOT POINTED OUT, ON 19 OCCASIONS BY CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENTS IN THE LAST 25 YEARS, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 LONDON 11366 02 OF 02 211743Z

AND ON 10 OCCASIONS BY LABOR GOVERNMENTS. WHAT IS NEW IN THIS INSTANCE IS THE INSTITUTION OF THE GUILLOTINE SIMULTANEOUSLY ON DISPARATE AND UNCONNECTED BILLS. SPEAKER'S RULING IS SEEN AS ESTABLISHING A NEW PRECEDENT FOR FUTURE GOVERNMENTS, LABOR OR CONSERVATIVE, AND SOME THEORISTS SEE POSITIVE ADVANTAGE IN USE OF GUILLOTINE TO IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS OF PARLIAMENTARY OPERATIONS AND ELIMINATE OR CURTAIL OPPOSITION'S DELAYING TACTICS. THERE IS SOME CONCERN THAT FUTURE GOVERNMENTS MAY RESORT INCREASINGLY TO USING THE GUILLOTINE TO CURTAIL PARLIAMENT'S "LEGITIMATE" RIGHTS TO DEBATE (AND OPPOSE) PROPOSED LEGISLATION.

10. GOVERNMENT'S SUCCESS IN CARRYING THROUGH CONTROVERSIAL LEGISLATION WILL, OF COURSE, STRENGTHEN ITS POSITION IN ENFORCING PUBLIC EXPENDITURE CUTS (REFTEL B). MPS EXPECT THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WILL ISSUE STATEMENT ON CUTS SHORTLY BEFORE THE RECESS, PERHAPS SOMETIME NEXT WEEK, AFTER GOVERNMENT HAS SUCCEEDED IN GETTING MAJOR LEGISLATION PASSED.

11. IN SPITE OF DEXTERITY OF HIS ORATORICAL FOOTWORK, LEADER OF THE HOUSE FOOT HAS INCREASINGLY COME UNDER ATTACK FROM HIS OWN BACKBENCH AS WELL AS CONSERVATIVE OPPOSITION FOR HIS INEPTITUDE IN ADMINISTERING THE AFFAIRS OF THE HOUSE. HIS CRITICS CONSIDER FOOT WAS FORCED TO CALL GUILLOTINE INTO PLAY AS A RESULT OF HIS OWN INEFFICIENCY. FOOT ALSO SHOWED SENSITIVITY IN HIS REMARKS TO CONSERVATIVE REFERENCES TO "IRON CURTAIN DESCENDING ON WESTMINSTER". SOME LABOR MPS ARE THREATENING LIBEL SUITS FOR REFERENCES CONSERVATIVE MPS MAKE TO THEM OUTSIDE OF WESTMINSTER AS "MARXISTS" OR "NEAR-MARXISTS".

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